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STANDARDIZATION OF IRON AND STEEL PRODUCTS IN THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

R. Haubold

After the end of the war in 1945, the only establishment left in the GDR (German Democratic Republic) for the production of iron and steel was the Maxhuette foundry in Unterwellenborn, Thueringen, which had been a part of the former Flick concern.

Under the greatest imaginable difficulties, the foundry workers have put the Maxhuette foundry back into operation and have striven to meet the urgent demands for rolling mill products of as many industries as possible in the entire GDR. In some instances this has been accomplished, even under the handicap of obsolete blast furnaces, rolling mill installations, machines, etc. Even though the Maxhuette foundry has not always been able, because of the shortage of raw materials and equipment, to meet the demands of industry 100 percent, at least it can take credit for having kept the industry going until similar establishments at Hennigsdorf and Kirchmoeser (planned and built by the government) were able to ease the situation.

However, even the additional productive capacity of these plants, making iron and steel of the most diverse qualities and specifications, was not enough to meet fully the demand for rolling mill products for consumption in the GDR and for the production of finished machines and implements for export.

On 17 August 1950, the cornerstone was laid for the largest and most modern foundry in Europe, near Fuerstenburg an der Oder. This new foundry combine will give work to 12,000 persons and will have an annual production capacity of 500,000 tons of pig iron and 550,000 tons of raw steel, once full-scale operations begin. Along with the already existing foundries, this combine will meet all industrial needs. A large part of the increasing supply of foundry products will be used for agricultural machinery, equipment, and tractors. These finished products, which will be allocated principally to machine rental stations and state farms, will, in turn, raise the standard of living.

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The production of such machines and equipment requires rolling-mill products of the most diverse qualities and specifications. Because of the unexpectedly rapid expansion, it is not always easy for foundry experts to meet the demands of industry 100 percent. Much has already been accomplished in this respect, but the remaining minor deficiencies must be ironed out. The full cooperation of all workers and the institution of quality brigades will effect this.

Much could be accomplished if the foundries and the industrial consumers would jointly examine the specifications for quality, sizes, and delivery dates, and agree to small deviations. This would help to raise the over-all output of the foundries, and industry would be able to meet its quotas more easily. Such compromises, beneficial to everyone concerned, call for a greater flexibility than has been evidenced up to now. For example:

Consumer A needs steel plate, 60 millimeters wide and 20 millimeters thick; consumer B needs steel plate 60 millimeters wide and 22 millimeters thick. The producer has at his disposal, a rolling mill for steel plate 58 millimeters wide and 22 millimeters thick. In this case, a concession must be made by the foundry, in that the rolling mill installation must be widened to 60 millimeters. This is possible without great difficulty, and would make things easier for the consumers. On the other hand, consumer A must accept the 60 x 22-millimeter product instead of the 60 x 20-millimeter material specified.

Agreement in the manner suggested above would lead to a general standardizing of machines and equipment in all branches of GDR industry.

The Central Office of Agricultural Engineering, Berlin, and the LBH (Federation of People-Owned Enterprises for Agricultural, Construction, and Woodworking Machinery), Leipzig, in cooperation with the Chamber of Technology, have already accomplished so much along this line that the first publications on the subject can be expected very shortly.

Cooperation is not always easy and has often led to revolutionary consequences. But that should not be a deterrent to upsetting old traditions, especially prevalent in the agricultural machinery industry, and from paving the way to better techniques, better machines and equipment, and the greatest possible output.

The greatest haste is recommended, and industry must strive to carry through a standardization which will bring with it great benefits for industry itself, particularly for basic industries such as iron and steel.

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